



National Interagency Fire Center
3838 S. Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705

September 3, 2005

To: All Personnel

From: National Multi Agency Coordinating Group

Subject: Katrina Recovery Effort Incident Assignments – What to Expect

The purpose of this memo is to provide advance notice to personnel of what to expect when mobilized to assist in the Katrina recovery effort. Under the National Response Plan, wildland fire resources may assist in response to national emergencies. To date, the primary job of our responders has been to staff distribution centers, base camps, and mobilization centers; however there are occasions where activities may expose personnel to a variety of hazards.

Conditions

With few exceptions, dispatched resources will be working for established Type 1 or Type 2 Incident Management Teams (IMTs), and the organizational structure will be similar to that of a wildland fire assignment. Most Incident Command Posts (ICPS) are located some distance from the center of the hurricane destruction; however there is no assurance that community infrastructures are intact. Attached to this memo is a two page summary developed by the safety and health coordination team on site. It provides a preliminary listing of the conditions responders might expect, and some advice on how best to prepare for them in advance. We advise that all responders familiarize themselves with this briefing before their departure.

Immunizations

The Fire, Aviation Safety Team consulted with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Public Health Service resulting in the following direction for all Wildland fire agencies responding to the hurricane disaster:

1. **Diphtheria/Tetanus:** All employees responding to Katrina should have received a Diphtheria/Tetanus booster within the last 10 years as part of routine medical care. Those likely to be mobilized are encouraged to be current with this recommendation or obtain the diphtheria/tetanus booster prior to being dispatched. However, mobilization should not be delayed in order to do so. Those at highest risk are employees in the process of debris cleanup, tree removal and cuts by nails or sharp objects. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U. S. Public Health Service advises that it is accepted medical protocol for a diphtheria/tetanus booster to be

administered, if needed, shortly after an injury occurs for those individuals already deployed.

2. Hepatitis A: The CDC does not believe responders to Katrina are at high risk for hepatitis A, and therefore are not recommending hepatitis A vaccinations. Good personal hygiene, ingesting clean food and water, and hand washing will prevent hepatitis A.
3. Hepatitis B: Most responders do not need hepatitis B. Only personnel providing direct patient care require this vaccine. Incident management teams will coordinate with medical providers on site to determine if this vaccination is considered necessary.

When resources obtain a pre-mobilization tetanus booster at their home unit, the cost will be borne by that unit. It is important that receipts and other records be kept so that reimbursement can occur if authorization is received.

The Federal Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FFAST) is providing direct liaison between NMAC and the health and safety coordinating team on site. Should you have any questions, or require further information, please contact your member of that team. They are:

John Gould – B IA

Rod Bloms – USFWL

Michelle Ryerson – BLM

Ed Hollenshead - FS

Al King – NPS

/s/ Don Artley
Chair, NMAC

Hurricane Katrina Relief Safety Considerations for Incoming Support Personnel

The mission of the Forest Service and cooperating agencies under the National Response Plan is to support the federal government's effort to bring emergency relief supplies to the storm damaged areas. As requested by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), our mission is to provide logistical support such as managing base camps for field hospitals, receiving and distributing equipment and relief supplies, managing the care, feeding and logistical support of thousands of relief workers and volunteers, for elderly and the infirm, and for other persons unable to evacuate. This is life-sustaining work in support of the hundreds of thousands of Americans impacted by the recent storm.

Much of the work tasked is novel to the Forest Service and our partner agencies that have expertise in forest and range "wildland" management. Due to the novelty of the work, special safety considerations must be given.

Prior to Departure from your Home Unit:

It is recommended you obtain a tetanus booster if not received within the past 10 years. Get as much information as possible concerning expected living conditions. If you are ordered to a coordination center you will likely have access to telephone service, restaurants and hotel lodging. If you are ordered to a logistical support center or other "field assignment" you may be living and working under primitive conditions.

Safety Considerations for Persons Ordered to Field Assignments:

Expect that you are going into a desperate situation. For the duration of your tour, plan on no electricity, no refrigeration and no telephone communications. In contrast to a "fire camp" you should assume that there will be no Supply Unit available. Therefore bring with you the following:

- ✓ fresh refill of any necessary prescriptions
- ✓ three MREs or other non-perishable meals
- ✓ a tent
- ✓ rain gear
- ✓ insect repellent
- ✓ light sleeping bag
- ✓ flashlight and extra batteries
- ✓ hard hat
- ✓ gloves
- ✓ first-aid kit with aspirin, Band-Aids, etc.
- ✓ sleeping pad if you have room.
- ✓ cash – (credit cards require phone lines)
- ✓ portable water purifier, if available

If you are driving, bring a few cases of water with you. If flying in, purchase extra water when you have the opportunity.

Hazards, Threats, and Mitigation Measures:

The following is a listing of the most common threats to your safety, and recommended mitigations.

Downed Power Lines	If you're not sure, treat all power lines as if they are live.
Contaminated Drinking Water	Assume all water is contaminated unless you saw the bottle it came from. Municipal water supplies in severely storm damaged areas are also likely contaminated.
Lightning	Take shelter in building or vehicle. Don't operate land-line phones, machinery, or electric motors. Get away from standing water. Do not use an umbrella Observe the "30~30" rule
Snags, broken tree tops and weakened trees.	Weakened trees, bent trees, and broken trees are everywhere. Secure your working area using certified fallers. Be wary of broken tops and limbs that haven't yet fallen.
Hydration and Heat Stress	Stay hydrated! You may need to drink up to a gallon of water per day to avoid dehydration in this tropical environment, even if you're not performing any physical work! Two to three gallons, supplemented with Gatorade or other electrolyte replacement drink, is necessary if performing arduous work. Monitor yourself and others for symptoms of heat stress. Cool down in an air-conditioned building or automobile if necessary. People not acclimated to high humidity are especially vulnerable to the southern heat.
Snakes/Insects/Animals	Avoid snakes, insects and stray animals. There are 6 varieties of poisonous snakes in the area. Cottonmouths will be exploring new pools and rattlesnakes will be searching for dry ground. Poisonous spiders and yellow jackets will be looking for dry areas to establish a new residence. Be sure to use insect repellent on all exposed skin, socks, and pant legs.

<p>Travel hazards including driving/collision with other vehicles, inoperable traffic lights, blown down street signs including stop signs, downed trees, loose livestock, high water, washed out roads, mud, gasoline shortages, and lack of communications.</p>	<p>In storm impacted areas do not depend on cell or land-line coverage. If you get lost, stuck in mud or high water, or trapped by fallen power lines or trees, it may be a very long time before you are found. Expect gasoline shortages or pumps not working in storm impacted areas. Daily travel should be conducted under the following constraints.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When traveling alone, establish a travel route and make it known (map and description) to a responsible person that will initiate a search along that route if you don't show up within a pre-determined time. ➤ Keep gasoline tanks at least ½ full. ➤ Carry rain gear and enough personal supplies (water, food, prescriptions, etc.) to be entirely self sufficient for 48 hours in the event you get stuck or lost, and have no communications. ➤ Listen to LOCAL radio stations while driving for information pertaining to weather, road closures, flood alerts, evacuation orders, tornado alerts, and gasoline shortages. ➤ Avoid travel on rural roads at night. ➤ Be wary of confused and stressed deer on roads. ➤ Be wary of livestock on roads due to downed fences. ➤ Be wary of traffic lights not operating and stop signs blown away. Treat uncontrolled intersections as 4-way stops. ➤ Heavy fog, especially along coastal areas, is common. The locals know where all the curves in the road are and may be driving much faster than is safe under foggy conditions.
<p>Desperate Survivors</p>	<p>Avoid stopping except in secure locations. If forced to stop, remain calm and be compliant with requests. Do not put yourself in danger by trying to defend your belongings or vehicle. Get out of the situation as quickly as possible.</p>

September 3, 2005